DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 728 IR 057 984

AUTHOR Andreeva, Irina A.; Kirkwood, Francis T.
TITLE The Role of Parliamentary Libraries in Eastern Europe in Ensuring Public Access to Government Information: The Case of Russia.
PUB DATE 2000-08-00
NOTE 9p.; In: IFLA Council and General Conference: Conference Proceedings (66th, Jerusalem, Israel, August 13-18, 2000); see IR 057 981.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla66/papers/071-112e.htm.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Information; Depository Libraries; Foreign Countries; *Government Libraries; *Government Publications; Library Collections; *Library Role; *Library Services
IDENTIFIERS Legal Deposit; *Parliamentary Libraries; Russia

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of the Parliamentary Library in Russia. The first section provides historical background. The second section addresses two prerequisites of the Parliamentary Library, i.e., the official documents collections and the rule of public law. The third section describes implementing public access to government information through the Russian Parliamentary Library, including the role of the library, legal deposit of official documents, the national official documents collection of the post-Soviet era, information sharing through reference services and interlibrary loan, publication of bibliographic indexes, and other Parliamentary Library publications. The fourth section considers the integration of library resources as the road to better service to the public. The fifth section discusses building a new millennium of democracy and peace, highlighting the following lessons that other libraries can draw from the experience of the Russian Parliamentary Library in providing government information to the public: (1) access depends on order (i.e., classification, unified collections, cataloging, indexing); (2) wide and effective public and legislative access demands automation and electronic networking of legal data; (3) public legal information should be shared between nations with similar legal heritages; and (4) librarians must share their training and expertise to build effective public services of legal and government information. (MES)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 450 728

IFLANET Search Contacts
Annual Conference

66th IFLA Council and General Conference

Jerusalem, Israel, 13-18 August

Conference Proceedings

Code Number: 071-112-E
Division Number: I
Professional Group: Library and Research Services for Parliaments
Joint Meeting with: -
Meeting Number: 112
Simultaneous Interpretation: *No*

The role of Parliamentary Libraries in Eastern Europe in ensuring public access to government information: the case of Russia

Irina A. Andreeva
Parliamentskaya Biblioteca, Moscow
Russian Federation

Francis T. Kirkwood
Library of Parliament, Ottawa
Ontario, Canada

A.L. Van Wesemael

Abstract

IFLA has committed itself to supporting the development of public access through libraries to government information and information about government, as a means of building democracy and civil society in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. This paper focuses not on the role of a typical Eastern European parliamentary library in serving its parliament, but rather on its responsibilities in the building of democracy. A parliamentary library in a country which is rediscovering democratic pluralism, such as Russia, has a special obligation to ensure wide public access to government information and information about the activities of government, and above all, to parliamentary documentation.

IR057984

Paper

Historical Background

In little more than a decade - eleven short years - the world has been turned upside down.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Berlin Wall fell. The countries of Eastern Europe, long dominated by a single ideology, shook off its bureaucratic control, expelled dictatorial regimes, elected free governments and turned to the West as their new economic and social model. In the Soviet Union itself, the monolithic superstate shuddered to a halt and began to crack. Its constituent republics reclaimed their independence, as *glasnost* and *perestroika* became disintegration and national rebirth.

Behind the political upheaval lay a deeper revolution. A disenchanted public dared to go beyond private cynicism to public demands for a better way of life. Television communicated the new ideals of democratic materialism, governments encountered the check of public opinion, parliaments became organs of public debate and crucibles of legislation. Information replaced official direction as the mainspring of society. And librarians, who had printed underground newspapers even while hosting IFLA in Moscow during the revolution of 1991, realised that they now had a continuing political mission: to build democracy and recreate civil society through the delivery of information that would create an informed, critical, participative citizenry.

Two Prerequisites: Official Documents Collections and the Rule of Public Law

It was in this historical context that the idea arose of restoring the Russian Parliamentary Library, which had first come into being in 1906 and had continued to serve the Duma of the Russian Empire and of its successor republics until 1918. In 1991 the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation decided that they needed a library to aid them in their work, and passed a law to that effect.

From the very beginning the new library's personnel encountered problems when it came to giving a precise and quick response to MPs' requests for published official documentation and legal norms, whether issued by the federal executive or by its regional counterparts. Not a single Russian library, not even the national ones, in those days was building separate collections of official documents, and consequently Russian librarians had developed neither suitable methods nor appropriate technology to handle the comprehensive acquisition and rapid retrieval of government information. The rule of law itself was in doubt when knowledge of the law and of administrative norms was so difficult to obtain.

In fact, from the 1920's down to 1990, Russia was under the rule of two laws. The first and most important in practice was based in the decrees, standards, and programmes of the Soviet Union's only allowed political party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The second, public legal regime was guided by the constitutions and legislation of the Soviet Union and of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, and was in reality secondary to norms laid down by party rule. The wording of legislation, even of constitutional articles, was seldom complete and not expected to be put into practice without reference to the requirements of party responsibility and party discipline, as enshrined in the decisions of the CPSU Central Committee.

Evidently, this state of affairs led Soviet libraries to emphasise the bibliographic recording and indexing of party documents and publications. The duality of the state was paralleled by a duality in its library system; in addition to public libraries, accountable to the Ministry of Culture, the Soviet Union had an extensive network of party libraries. While the party libraries considered their main task to consist in meticulously collecting, indexing, preserving and

disseminating Communist Party documents, the public libraries too did their best to assist in the implementation of the decisions of the latest party congresses by providing full documentation and access. Resources for public legislative information were not the focus of the library community's attention. Indeed, the only library professionals who took any interest in the official documents and legal norms of the Soviet state were those employed by the legal services departments of the various governmental establishments or institutions of state power. Such special libraries only collected and indexed the official publications relevant to their institution's particular sphere of activity, and the fruit of their labours was meant for the eyes of its lawyers alone.

During the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federal Constitution of 1978, as amended in 1990, became the only supreme law for all the citizens of Russia, irrespective of their party convictions. The new 1993 Constitution paved the way for introducing legal reforms on a grand scale, encompassing every field of public life in the country. The principles of a state under the rule of law, as declared in the new Russian Federal Constitution, enshrine the dominant role of public law as the source for public norms and values. Today, the Russian Constitution guarantees every citizen "the right freely to seek, receive, pass on, produce, and disseminate information by any legal method" - **and means it**. The securing of uniform, free public access to legal and governmental information has become a concern of the state.

The Russian library community was eager to tackle the task of providing free public access to legal information and soon set to work on it. Indeed, realising the potential offered by the new technologies of information, the Russian Ministry of Culture, with the support of other public authorities and of public foundations and non-governmental organisations, in 1998 embarked on a scheme to set up a number of public legal information centres in association with Russia's vast network of more than 50,000 libraries open to the public - federal and regional, urban and rural. But the effort is not just being directed from the top. As speakers noted in Moscow and as participants could observe first-hand in Ryazan during the four-day international seminar on the topic held in Russia by IFLA's Government Information and Official Publications Section in May 1999, the role of libraries in ensuring public access to official publications and government information is a major professional concern of Russian librarianship today. And recent progress has been astounding. In 1999 and the first quarter of 2000 the Ministry of Culture opened 14 legal information centres, most in connection with libraries at the regional level, and it has plans for others throughout Russia's 89 federal regions. Even more significant are the statistics and reports indicating that as many as 60 Russian libraries last year, and perhaps over 250 by now, have taken the initiative in setting up their own reading rooms for public access to legal information, without waiting for central government funding or permission.

Implementing Public Access Through the Russian Parliamentary Library

Where does the Russian Parliamentary Library fit into the provision of public access to government information? What is its role?

In 1994, a year after the new Russian constitution was endorsed, the new Parliament (State Duma and Federation Council) enacted a federal law on the provision of a mandatory, or legal deposit, copy of official documents, which provided a more solid legal footing for libraries to implement the constitutional principle of public access to government information. For the first time in the

history of Russian librarianship, libraries and depositories were legally encouraged to build up collections of official documents for public benefit, as an integral part of the nation's library resources. The federal law defines the nature of official documents, requires their timely provision to the national library system by governmental bodies, and assigns to the Parliamentary Library the responsibility for their bibliographic and statistical control, as the national depository of official publications.

Deposit at the Parliamentary Library covers more than laws and parliamentary publications. The deposit law now extends to documents produced by other federal government institutions and by the regions, allowing the Parliamentary Library to quickly build up an adequate depository collection and to keep it up to date with a steady influx of further acquisitions. It took about two years for the library staff to develop a streamlined check-in system to monitor the regular delivery of mandatory copies of official publications from federal government institutions such as the ministries and government committees, as well as from their regional counterparts. The efficiency of the check-in system in tracking published official documents and ensuring that they are received can be shown by some simple statistics: in 1994 (the year the law entered into force), the Parliamentary Library got 262 official periodical titles, but by the year 2000 this figure had risen to 309 official periodicals.

In the Parliamentary Library depository collections one can find literally **all** Russian federal official publications, and, with a small exception, the same can also be said about materials issued in the 89 constituent entities of the Russian Federation (regions, oblasts, autonomous republics). The collection of federal parliamentary documents is exhaustive, including not only copies of the laws enacted and records of the plenary parliamentary sittings, but also draft laws or bills, MPs' questions, and verbatim reports of special parliamentary hearings. Analytical research documents and informational materials prepared by the Parliament's support services are also collected.

The personnel of the Parliamentary Library consider it their main task to create the national official documents collection of the post-Soviet era, as a contribution to resource-sharing among Russian libraries. All official documents entering this special collection are processed and classified according to the standards of library science, and in this way information on their availability can be made known to millions of potential readers.

The official documents collection and its electronic cataloguing enable the Parliamentary Library to offer reference and information services to a wide variety of clients from the Duma and the Federation Council - MPs, their aides, parliamentary committee staff - and also to outsiders - clients from governmental departments, the federal executive, the courts, regional executive bodies, legal information centres, as well as individual researchers, accredited representatives of the press and other media of information, and of course other librarians. Dozens of enquiries are dealt with daily from external clients, and a full range of user access options is provided irrespective of the client's age, sex, nationality, residence, social or legal status, financial opportunities, or religious beliefs.

Nor is the service restricted to Moscow. Official publications are made available to other libraries through the interlibrary loan system, and copies of documents are sent out all across the country in response to requests. Close co-operation has been established with the new public library legal information centres. And the Russian Parliamentary Library is on the verge of making all its electronic resources accessible to the end user through the global Internet network.

The crucial task of current bibliographic registration and indexing of official publications is also facilitated by the federal legal deposit legislation. Since 1996 the library has had electronic databases at its disposal which allow the publication of two monthly current bibliographic indexes, themselves state publications: *Official Documents of the Russian Federation's Governmental Institutions* and *Official Documents of Institutions in the Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation*, as well as the *Bibliographic Index of Official Periodicals* which is printed twice a year. All three indexes are meant for a broad public but rank as scientific publications and could be used to do scientific investigation, as educational tools, and as aids to consultation and bibliographic searching. These reference publications follow the standards of current national bibliography. All three titles are registered with the Russian Federation Ministry for Press, TV and Mass Communications as official periodicals issued by Parliament, and their relatively low prices make subscription affordable to public libraries and most citizens. Also, over 250 public libraries, among them all the republic, regional and district libraries in the Russian Federation, currently receive these printed indexes at no cost, as a gift of Parliament.

As seen from client feedback, these bibliographic indexes of Russian official publications are widely used for reference purposes by public and special libraries and by legal information services both in Russia and abroad. The indexes have already been of assistance to millions of Russians, not only to search for official publications but to find such information as who initiated a draft law, the date when a law entered into force, or the area to which it applies. With the indexes in hand, it takes a very brief time to establish which of the official journals or newspapers first published the document in question, and, in case of need, to borrow the publication from the nearest library.

The ever increasing number of subscriptions to these printed indexes proves the Parliamentary Library was right to choose this special strategy of disseminating bibliographic information on official documents. As compared to the year 1997 when the indexes went to only 270 subscribers (organisations, institutions, libraries and individuals), subscriptions to them in the first six months of the year 2000 have reached 3080.

The publishing activity of the Parliamentary Library in the field of official publications librarianship is not confined to the issuing of current bibliographies. These are supplemental to a series of retrospective reference materials already in print, such as the *Index of State Duma Publications*, the *Index of Russian Laws*, and the *Index of Publications of Charters and Constitutions of the Entities of the Russian Federation*. Soon to appear are personal bibliographies of the leaders of the different political groupings in Parliament. Other efforts are undertaken solely to maintain public interest in the activity of the Russian Parliament and to make its work transparent to the public, while reinforcing public trust in parliamentary institutions in a time of eroded public values and negative attitudes towards all public authorities.

Conspicuous among the publications of the Parliamentary Library are the *Indexes to the Records of Chamber Sittings of the Federal Assembly* (now only in electronic form) and the information and research materials prepared using them. Since 1996 a select service of the Parliamentary Library has been to do subject and name indexing of all MPs' oral contributions in debate, which makes it possible for the library staff to compile chronicles of the progress of major constitutional and budgetary legislation through the chamber, and in case of need (often following a request from an MP) to specify the dates of different stages in the slow progress of a particular piece of legislation.

All the library's publications are present in electronic format on the parliamentary Intranet and will soon be found on the Internet when the corresponding website of the State Duma is operational.

With the aim of furthering international information co-operation and exchange between libraries, the European Parliament's EUROVOC thesaurus has been translated into Russian and adapted for use by the Parliamentary Library in processing Russian official documents. This will make Russian official documents accessible to a significantly greater circle of potential users.

It is also worth mentioning that the Parliamentary Library of the Russian Federation has been developing and cataloguing a collection of Russian language official documents of the former Soviet republics, including the Baltic states, as well as in collecting the current legislation of these countries, through bilateral exchanges of documents. Such collections are of great assistance in the forming of sound legislation through comparison of each other's approaches to a given subject.

Needless to say, the Parliamentary Library is not the only source of information support to the legislative activity of the Russian Parliament. However, the library acts on the assumption that official documents, and especially those that record legislation, are a Russian national asset, and takes seriously the task of providing the public with timely information on new legislation and new government publications received. Parliament fully appreciates this work that the library does in informing the public.

Integration of Library Resources is the Road to Better Service to the Public

Recent experience proves that public access to collections of legal and government information is not only important for lawyers and other professionals with legal interests, but also for ordinary citizens who have no legal training. This is why so many Russian library users want to receive regular information about decisions taken by the executive, and to have unobstructed access to both federal and regional official documents. They are similarly anxious to be able to retrieve from electronic databases current legislation, bills and reports of parliamentary debates. These enhancements of legislative activity in the Russian Federation in turn generate an increasing desire on the part of the MPs and their aides to receive relevant legislative information and research papers on a particular topic of legislation.

To solve these problems to everyone's advantage, five leading Russian libraries are proposing to create a shared information space by pooling their respective catalogues, electronic databases, electronic documentation, and experience in library and information technologies, and establishing technical, organisational and communications capabilities for a wider dissemination and shared use of present and future electronic resources. The project envisages incorporating the information resources of the consortium participants in a single library network, and professional exchanges and training programmes between the participants. This would make possible shared processing of library resources and a common access to the resources of all the participating libraries not only by each other's users but by users at the other end of the country. New types of information services would inevitably be developed, including the electronic delivery of government documents from the collections of the participating libraries and direct access to full-text electronic copies of the documents.

Within the proposed consortium, the Russian Parliamentary Library will have primary responsibility for handling official publications and government information. The Parliamentary Library's participation will greatly expand Russia's capabilities of disseminating government information and official documents to the people, and will mark another important step toward building a civil society based on the rule of law.

The experience of the restored Russian Parliamentary Library during the re-establishment of Russian democracy illustrates the great importance of a national parliamentary library playing a role beyond the walls of Parliament. It must take a leadership role in the working out of terminology and classification standards for legal and parliamentary materials in its country's libraries; it must demonstrate excellence to the library community in its provision of a high level of parliamentary information service; it must be committed not only to serving its parliament but to ensuring the civic education and democratic development of an informed general public.

Building a new Millennium of Democracy and Peace

What lessons can IFLA and the world's parliamentary libraries draw from the experience of the Russian Parliamentary Library in providing government information to the public?

- Access depends on order: classification, unified collections, cataloguing, indexing.
- Wide and effective public and legislative access demands automation and electronic networking of legal data.
- Public legal information should be shared between nations with similar legal heritages.
- Librarians must share their training and expertise to build effective public services of legal and government information.

It is no accident that these four points correspond to the resolutions forwarded to IFLA for approval last year by the Eastern Europe seminar on the Role of Libraries in Ensuring Public Access to Official Publications and Government Information, held in Moscow by our sister IFLA section and frequent collaborator, GIOPS (the Government Information and Official Publications Section). In supporting these Moscow resolutions in December 1999 the IFLA Professional Board called upon the IFLA core programs and sections most concerned, and in particular the Section of Library and Research Services for Parliaments, to co-operate in four professional initiatives to aid democratic development through libraries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: cataloguing in publication of government information, shared international legal databases, agreements for virtual exchanges of official publications in electronic format, and especially international and regional training exchanges of public documents librarians to build professional expertise in the work of ensuring public information access.

The civil society of the new millennium must be an electronic polity, in which citizens and governments, interest communities and nations share full public information to build understanding, democracy and peace. Neither socialism nor capitalism, nor any other *-ism*, but only an informed citizenry, can keep government in its place and allow the free development of the potential and dreams of humankind. Eastern Europe is a laboratory and parliamentary libraries

are among its leading researchers in the quest for new ways to bring government information to the people. The world has been turned upside down, but the real revolution has just begun.

Latest Revision: *May 23, 2000*

Copyright © 1995-2000
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
www.ifla.org